



Dear Hertford Community,

I hope that you got a decent break, despite the challenging circumstances. My sense is that this lockdown feels even harder for many. Solidarity. I hope you're finding a way through that works for you.

This is normally the best week of term. There should be a sense of expectation, energy, and promise in the quads. Instead, we are leaning into another period of physical distance from each other and from the privilege of living and working in Hertford. As you can imagine, the college therefore feels a very different place to normal. To protect our community, the facilities on Catte Street are closed, even the marquee that was such a key part of Michaelmas Term. We have a few students in residence, but the vast majority are remote learning.

While we have some muscle memory from Trinity 2020 of how to do this, it demands new effort and agility from students, tutors, and staff. A huge 2021 admissions effort and this term's collections have been online. All at a time when many are weary and anxious, and juggling extra family commitments. But we are keen to continue to ensure the highest quality learning environment that the context allows, and everyone is adapting with characteristic Hertford spirit. Perhaps with the exception of Simpkin, who has taken advantage of the lack of oversight to terrorise the Exeter cat, Walter.

Simpkin is currently in the Library Office helping Alex the library assistant prepare book parcels for recent postal requests.



We are of course maintaining or scaling up our work in some key areas: welfare, access to online resources, community, communication, study skills. You can watch my latest message to students on all this [here](#) or join my #VirtualPrincipal Slack channel for updates. Meanwhile, our Outreach Team continues to work closely with schools and colleges to ensure that prospective applicants - and especially those from less advantaged backgrounds - receive the guidance and support they need.

My challenge to everyone is to identify creative ways to make this term as positive an experience as possible, despite the lockdown. We hope that our alumni will be a key part of that. So please do join us online when you can. We are rolling out alumni events on specific regions and themes, starting with an excellent Asia gathering last week, so please look out for more events on email or social media. Hertford figures will be sharing their desert island discs and books: watch this space. We're grateful to all of you who have offered to talk to our students about careers and are keen to find more contacts: do get in touch if you can help.

Look out for great content from the community, including Peter Millican's latest [podcast](#) on pandemics, Emma Smith on [Macbeth and terrorism](#) or Ciaran Martin on [cyber](#). We'll have more online 21st Century Survival Skills, following these sessions on protecting your [privacy](#); [negotiation](#) and [how to be global](#). There will be a calendar of online chapel [here](#), and you can watch our [carols](#) here if you missed them. Given the inauguration this week, you might enjoy our panel on [the prospects for Biden](#). For those interested, here are my podcasts on [the future of learning](#), relevant to these challenges of remote study.

Looking ahead, I still hope that we can get back to something approaching normality in Trinity Term. We are as determined as ever to create the space and

time for all those parts of Oxford life that are in normal times so important to the experience of studying here: all that is postponed, not cancelled. We are also looking at the possibilities for more events over the summer, if conditions change, including delayed graduation celebrations, outreach to disadvantaged communities, music and cultural moments in the quad, and the chance for students and alumni to visit with friends, family, and former teachers. Do let us have your ideas.

Meanwhile, plenty of great news to share. David Stuart was [knighted](#) for his work on medical sciences, including vaccines for viruses like Covid19. Announced today, [Chris Schofield](#) is leading a 100m UKP project on anti-microbial resistance. And there have been a great deluge of awards since I last wrote. [Martin Maiden](#) won the Marjory Stephenson Prize for his work on microbiology and vaccination. [Mike Wooldridge](#) won the Lovelace Medal, the UK's top computing prize; and an award for best AI educator. [Lewis Fry](#) won the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers Master's Medal for his work on gene therapy and blindness. Fernando Alday has been appointed the Rouse Ball Professor of Mathematics. [Louise Slater](#) has been awarded the 2021 Division Outstanding Early Career Scientist Award for Geomorphology by the leading organisation for Earth, planetary and space science research in Europe. [Manolis Chatzis](#) has been recognised as a 2019 Outstanding Reviewer by the ASCE Journal of Engineering Mechanics. [Zhanfeng Cui](#), who pioneered a rapid testing solution for Covid-19, has been recognised by the Royal Academy of Engineering. [Fernanda Duarte](#) has won the Molecular Graphics and Modelling Society's Frank Blaney Award.

Also wonderful to share that Former Principal Sir Walter Bodmer was married (Covid19-compliantly of course) in Hertford's chapel just before Christmas. I know everyone will join me in wishing he and Ann the very best. Many congratulations also to Hertford Butler Izabela who gave birth to baby Oliver four weeks ago – mother and baby doing well.

Amid a fragile moment, there are many factors within our control as a college: our sense of purpose and values; fundraising and sound financial management; the best use of our collective talent; how we select, teach, and develop our students; and choices about where we spend our time, expertise, and money. If we respond to those challenges, we can be part of the answer to the wider uncertainties.

So, we'll also use this term to surge ahead with our thinking on Hertford 2030. Thank you for all the ideas and encouragement so far. I am keen we build on our tradition of reform, independent thinking, and tolerance; updated in recent decades with an unstuffy openness and a commitment to both access and academic rigour. We have such strengths, including our reputation as a pioneer on state school admissions, a jaw dropping location at the heart of Oxford, and rapid progress over just a few decades from being a poor college with weak academic results to a serious contender (as the awards above demonstrate). As you know, I'm keen that Hertford 2030 is a home for extraordinary research and teaching; a pioneer of access, equality and sustainability; and a thriving,

open, friendly community. That will require creative thinking on the next leap forward in access and opportunity, our business model, sustainability. We have ambitious plans for our library and facilities. And by 2030 we'll have over 10,000 alumni, so part of the reflection is about the impact they can make in society: I think we would already come high in the Norrington Table for that.

The pandemic has also prompted us to reflect on what more we can do to be a good neighbour: pandemics don't know the difference between town and gown. Throughout, this conversation we will also reflect on what can we learn from our peers; the changing skills we need; and the biggest risks to our mission, plans, and prospects. I'm grateful to Emma Smith for steering these strategic discussions.

Hertford features in episode 8 of the latest series of *The Crown*. A young Margaret Thatcher is seen walking up Holywell Street.



As I've said to our students, a college was a community before it was a building. With our much-loved building closed and even our bridge out of bounds, this will be a term where that sense of partnership becomes even more important.

A final more optimistic thought. I hope that many alumni are now receiving their Covid19 vaccines. This is a reminder of what Oxford can contribute to the world. We will have opportunities ahead to celebrate that, and to congratulate those above (and many others) for their achievements in a tough period. But even more importantly, Hertford students are setting out this week on the next stage of their journey with us. The interactions they have - physically isolated but intellectually united - with tutors and peers this week will help them be part of Oxford's contribution to the world in the future. We're rooting for them, and they know you are too.

I look forward to welcoming everyone back to Hertford soon. For now, do stay in touch, and best wishes for the term ahead.



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